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SEMINAR REPORT

SELECTION OF CLANDESTINE TARGETS

IN THE DO

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF INTELLIGENCE

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF INTELLIGENCE

3 February 1977

Seminar Report: The Selection of Clandestine Targets in the Directorate of Operations

A group of thirteen experienced DO officers gathered on 16 December 1976 under the Center's auspices to discuss the problems and needs, strengths and weaknesses of the present Directorate systems for the selection of clandestine targets.

The group, which was by chance more representative of the staffs than the line divisions, concluded that the present system of targeting is a fairly effective one that does not err seriously in achieving its objectives. Nevertheless, it noted several significant issues affecting the process. The key issue, the group overwhelmingly agreed, is how to distinguish between what can be obtained overtly and what must be collected covertly by human sources. Although the discussion ranged widely across many aspects of the process, this issue repeatedly emerged as critical.

Apart from this difficulty, other significant problems impeding the effective operation of the targeting system today include the "no surprises dictum," the continuing overemphasis on the collection of intelligence on insignificant targets, an inadequate appreciation, especially by requestors, of overtly available information, and the lack of any uniform set of measurements with which to validate the worth of and need for

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clandestine collection. The initial section of this paper describes the discussion on these impediments, while later sections deal with the targeting system itself in some detail.

Problems Faced in the Targeting System

Of the impediments to the smooth working of the present system, probably the sharpest posed by the participants was that of the "no surprises" dictum. This is the concept under which station chiefs are expected to collect whatever information is necessary to prevent the U.S. from being surprised by a foreign development potentially important to U.S. interests. This collection effort is to be maintained regardless of the specific targeting priorities of the station. The application of this dictum tends to complicate efforts to move in the direction of narrowing and sharpening the targets for clandestine human collection, especially against soft targets -- where the Agency is already viewed as spread too thin, and where the difficulties of determining what can be collected overtly as opposed to covertly are most severe. One participant believes we collect entirely too much information, and then disseminate it, simply because our field officers are under the "no surprises" dictum and dare not relax a full grasp of the local political scene even though other Agencies and Departments should be responsible for reporting those developments.

In this connection several participants bemoaned the refusal of the Department of State to task its foreign service

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officers with reporting responsibilities, although the Department's recent selection of one reporting coordination officer to work outside of INR is viewed as a promising move in the right direction. Some expressed the view that we are too much haunted by the "no surprises" dictum to set about trimming our sails down to a really effective collection effort. Two of the participants claimed that collection against soft targets will be narrowed and refined as budgetary and other pressures increase. The implication was that unless we get our priorities straight on the "no surprises" dictum, this refinement process will be needlessly disorganized and possibly ineffective.

The second problem is that of assuring that the line is held against the collection of insignificant information. Some of the participants opined that there is an inordinate interest by users in questions of relatively minor importance to national interests, even by high officials on occasion and more often by analysts who suddenly have an interest in, or an assignment to write about, some subject of distinctly secondary significance. In the view of the participants, these analysts needlessly generate targeting on less-than-essential collection. One participant argued for formalizing all requirements on the DO through the Requirements Branch of the Intelligence Control Group of the DO Policy and Coordination Staff to minimize this problem. While this would tend to screen out less important requests, it would also undercut the

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flexibility and real-life responsiveness of the more commonly used "informal" system described later in this paper. The number of formal requirements levied on the DO in the past few years has declined and now appears to be steadying at a more manageable level.

A third problem faced in the targeting process is that of a thorough appreciation of the overtly available information. Some participants believed that it is the responsibility of the analyst to know all the potential and actual sources of overt information on his specialty, but the participants complained that too frequently the analyst does not care how he gets the information he wants, and when faced with an inability to command overt collection, turns to the clandestine service saying he could not get the information overtly. This raises the question whether it is necessary in this age of exploding information sources to create a bureaucratic and community-wide structure to ferret out overtly available information and then assemble it for the analyst. While a part of a draft National Foreign Intelligence Plan for Human Resources (NPHRC) being developed by the Human Resources Committee (HRC), described later in this paper, does not go this far it at least envisions identifying all overt sources of intelligence on selected topics. It should certainly be the responsibility of any good DO reports or case officer to know the overtly available information on the subject on which he is working. The working assumption

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seems to be that he does, as the separation of overtly available from covertly collectible is most frequently made by the line officers of the DO Divisions in consultation with either the requestor or the Requirements Branch. Although all participants in the seminar were not unanimous in the degree of confidence they expressed in the capabilities of the line officers to do this, the majority believed they did have the capacity.

The last of the problems facing the targeting system discussed by the group was the lack of a uniform set of measurements by which to validate both the worth of and the need for clandestine collection. While the Requirements Branch attempts to bring together a meeting of the minds on both points with formal requests, and usually succeeds in doing so, it is not staffed with professionals in every field and cannot act as the court of last resort on serious basic disputes. Furthermore, it does not handle a myriad of the collection requests informally levied on the DO. Too rarely, thought the participants, is a clear declaration made by Agency authorities that the information can be collected overtly and therefore should not be collected by clandestine means--especially if it is <u>not</u> presently being overtly collected. Who is empowered to make such a declaration? The collector has a difficult time saying no, when an analyst says, "I need the information and I can't get it from those who could be collecting overtly because they are not doing so now, and are

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unwilling to do so in the future." Whether the new NPHRC system that provides a community input will ever approach a solution to this is in question, as the NPHRC will treat with selected areas of need only and, to succor community cooperation and participation, will have no directive power over individual agency or departmental targeting.

How the System Works

The group began its discussion on the targeting system itself by focusing on the operation of the formal and informal elements that make it up. One question to be asked is whether the process is flexible enough to meet changing targeting needs. The participants, in general, agree that it is. It is noted that the system was of sufficient health to accommodate the rather drastic functional change in our targeting over the past five years during which collection efforts were effectively redirected toward such subjects as terrorism, economics, narcotics, and regional and raw material organizations. A parallel demonstration of flexibility has taken place in connection with harder targets in the denied areas of the world where our targeting has become more refined and precise.

In maintaining this flexibility, the participants concluded that the informal part of the process was the most important to targeting. This system, which seems to handle the larger proportion of the targets, is engaged when one analyst (either within or outside CIA) contacts a line divisional officer of the DO, usually a reports officer, to indicate an interest in

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acquiring some specific intelligence information. One of the major strengths of this system, in the opinion of some of the participants, is the opening it provides for a fairly frank and explicit discussion of sources and collection capabilities -- subjects that would never be committed to print and circulation because of the security risks involved. There are occasions when this system results in a formalizing of the request through the Requirements Branch, but this is not the result of the majority of the informal targeting discussions which take place.

When the formal requirements system is engaged through the Requirements Branch, the Branch consults with the line divisional officers involved first to determine whether the information is worth collecting and second whether the information is collectible by overt means. It they determine it is both, the request is usually directed to the Domestic Collection Division, or the requestor may be referred to the Department of State or other overt collectors of foreign information. The formal launching of a request for intelligence through this system from within the Agency also encompasses close coordination with the Human Sources Group, Requirements and Evaluation Staff (RES/HSG) of the Comptrollers Office, which replaced the Collection Guidance and Assessments Staff (CGAS). The RES/HSG acts as a representative of the producing elements of the Agency. (Indeed requirements may come to the DO through RES/HSG. According to one participant, RES/HSG is eager to take a longer view of

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requirements, anticipating needs rather than reacting to crises.)

Internal Guidance: the Objectives

Despite the reliance on the informal part of the targeting process, individual DO officers are not working in a vacuum without general formal guidance on where the clandestine effort should be directed. The established system for the direction of operational effort is the DO objectives. In formulating these, the DCI objectives, the DCI "Perspectives" document, and the Key Intelligence Questions (KIQs) as well as other community guidance documents are consulted. The DO objectives, insofar as clandestine targeting is concerned, work the direct reverse of accepted Management by Objective (MBO) principles. Instead of being developed from the bottom up, as good MBO doctrine requires, the DO objectives are set from the top down. This was considered by the participants to be the right way to do it. The DCI objectives are translated into DO objectives, which in turn are translated into objectives for each of the overseas stations. Theoretically, at least, the documents from which the DO objectives are developed reflect inputs from the intelligence community's customers and from the producers of finished intelligence -- i.e., the parties who should be setting both the substance and the priorities.

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The danger of targeting from the bottom up would be in letting assets rather than needs drive the system. That needs do drive the system is obvious when one considers the tremendous premium placed upon recruitment of new sources (in contrast to the exploitation of existing ones) and the heavier weighting given to hard as opposed to soft targeting. Also assisting in keeping the system focused upon the right targeting is the reports evaluation system which grades the intelligence reports as they come in. Those which are not responsive to the objectives tend to get lower grades and this in turn discourages further pursuit of that line of information. Rewards (high grades) for on-target reporting complete the process of maintaining discipline in the entire system.

External Guidance: the Focus Program and Others

Among the specific external elements contributing to the targeting process for clandestine human collection, are the FOCUS Review Program of the DCI Human Resources Committee, the Key Intelligence Questions (KIQ) system of the Intelligence Community, the DCID 1/2 which sets priorities, and finally, the nascent NPHRC.

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The FOCUS program, which provides systematic reviews of reporting by human collectors stationed in diplomatic missions abroad, produced mixed reviews from participants. Those who believed FOCUS reviews were helpful pointed out that in FOCUS Thailand, the review had assisted in sharpening station clandestine human targeting. This specific report suggested ways of eliminating that which was not needed and placing more emphasis upon that which was needed. There are similar examples in other reports. It was noted, however, that the current emphasis of FOCUS is on reviewing the full spectrum of human source reporting. FOCUS does not now deal with the methods of collection--overt versus covert.

The Department of State actively supports the FOCUS program, and State is expected to propose that the Current Intelligence Requirements Lists (CIRLs) be terminated except for the USSR, the PRC, North Korea, and Eastern Europe. State may propose an expansion of the FOCUS program to include the most important overseas missions every two years (approximately 40 countries). Most participants agreed that FOCUS assessments tend to bring to the attention of senior officers corrections and adjustments that need to be made in targeting. One participant voiced his view that a serious flaw in the current FOCUS approach was the tendency of each department/agency to evaluate its own contribution and to protect itself in FOCUS reports. There is too much emphasis on what was being done well rather than on areas of weakness.

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The Key Intelligence Question system is also useful to the individual DO officer in targeting for clandestine collection. The KIQ strategy sessions were highly praised by one of the line DO officers participating in the seminar. He said these sessions gathered the specialists on the subject from the entire community who could among themselves quickly and effectively focus on gaps in information and on which agency was best equipped to cover those gaps. There are, however, some limiting factors to be considered in evaluating the KIQ contribution to DO targeting efforts. The KIQs are selective and not all-inclusive of total needs. The KIQ Evaluation Process (KEP) was dropped because it did not work, which eliminated a theoretically useful means to measure how effective KIQs are, inter alia, in targeting clandestine human assets on vital information gaps.

A collateral activity originally under one of the National Intelligence Officers was given very high praise by all in attendance, that of the Pilot Collection Program (PCP). (This activity is coordinated by the former NIO for Special Activities, now designated the Special Assistant for Strategic Intelligence in the Comptrollers Office.) There are four PCPs presently envisioned: [redacted] 25X1C

[redacted] 25X1C

Two are already activated and appear to be ideal techniques for bringing to bear all of the assets of the Intelligence Community on a specific selected target--with emphasis upon

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maximum collection by other than clandestine human means. DCD and the overt exchange programs of ERDA are very much exploited in the first two PCP processes, which those involved consider extremely effective.

One external program that assists the DO officers in their clandestine targeting is the prioritizing of intelligence needs that is done in the annual update to the DCID 1/2. Although some proposed alterations in the DCID 1/2 had been suggested in the issues paper for the seminar, those who expressed an opinion did not believe that any attempt should be made to alter the DCID 1/2 in order to assist in targeting. DCID 1/2 was viewed as useful for the broad guidance on how our priorities should be ranked and as necessary for the SIGINT and Imagery disciplines as well as the human one.

A Coordinated Community Voice

A nascent program to develop community-driven collection guidance and requirements for human source collection is underway in the DCI's Human Resources Committee (HRC). This would go beyond the consulting of DCI "Perspectives," Objectives, and the KIQs earlier noted as an input to the formulation of DO objectives. The program is being developed to fill several needs which have long been recognized in the intelligence community, among them the fact that the community does not have an authoritative and comprehensive requirements system in operation for human collection of intelligence, either overt or covert.

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The DCI attached much importance to the issues addressed in this program. In his "Goals and Objectives for FY 1977" he discussed (on page 3) the need to assure that the input from non-intelligence entities is considered along with the availability of all other data in deliberations leading to the tasking of intelligence collection and production resources, and the need to optimize the use of overt collection means before resorting to more expensive clandestine or technical collection. The DCI reportedly was to make essentially the same points in his "Annual Report to the President and to Congress," and in his "Perspectives for Planning and Programming FY 1979-1983."

Under the community program, the HRC will examine defined national intelligence needs to determine their appropriateness for collection by human resources, after which appropriate guidance will be developed for collection managers. In developing this guidance the HRC is to give particular attention to: (a) the degree of consumer reliance on human source reporting relative to the need in question; (b) the foreign information holdings and collection capabilities of non-intelligence entities; and (c) the likelihood that overt collectors can obtain the needed information or, conversely, what clandestine collection input might be required. The program will augment and support the autonomous "foreign affairs community." Guidance concerning a given national

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intelligence need may be developed solely for human resource collection or in conjunction with SIGINT and Imagery collection.

This HRC program is still in the conceptual stage of development, as one of the action programs in the draft NPHR currently being developed for DCI approval. Concern was expressed at the seminar as to whether this concept might be an unnecessary and bureaucratic encumbrance upon the present system. Some thought such matters could be handled better by the individual departments themselves.

The feelings of other participants who expressed themselves on this community input to clandestine targeting were more positive. They believed it was necessary and useful to the general effort to select the right targets and to narrow the scope of the targets that must be covered by clandestine human sourse collection.

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